Sri Somanatheshwara Guhalaya in Nellitheertha, Mangalore

Ref: AI overview

This is a historic 15th-century cave temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, located about 30 km from Mangaluru near Kuppepadavu. It features a sacred 200-meter natural cave and dates back to at least 1487 CE. [1, 2]

Key Temple Details

- **Main Deity:** Sri Somanatheshwara (Lord Shiva), alongside Sri Mahaganapati and Sage Jabali.
- **Location:** Kompadavu village, near Bajpe/Kuppepadavu, Mangaluru Taluk, Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka.
- **Distance from Mangaluru:** Approx. 30 km (about a 45-to-50-minute drive via Bajpe).
- **General Timings:** Daily from 5:00 AM to 1:00 PM and 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM (Main temple). [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]

The Cave and Rituals

- **Cave Access Schedule:** Open to the public only for six months, typically from **October 17** (Tula Sankramana) to **April 14** (Mesha Sankramana). It remains closed during the monsoon and rainy months. [1, 2, 3]
- **Cave Timings:** 7:30 AM to 1:00 PM during the open season. [1]
- **The Ritual:** Devotees must take a holy bath in the temple pond (*Nagappa Kere*) before entering. Visitors have to crawl on their knees through the narrow 200-meter natural rock cave to reach the inner sanctum housing a natural pool and a sacred Shiva Lingam. [1, 2, 3, 4]

T**ransportation options from Mangaluru:**

The fastest way to travel from Mangaluru to Sri Somanatheshwara Guhalaya in Nellitheertha is by **driving or hiring a private taxi**, which takes approximately **41 to 46 minutes** depending on your exact starting point and route choice. [1]

Travel Options Breakdown

1. Private Vehicle or Taxi (Most Convenient)

- **Primary Route:** Take the Bejai Kavoor Road and State Highway 67 (SH 67) northbound through Bajpe and Permude.
- **Alternate Route:** Travel via Airport Road/Bondel Road, connecting back to SH 67 toward Kompadavu.
- **Taxi Booking:** Rental cabs and auto-rickshaws are easily available for hire from Mangaluru Central Railway Station, KSRTC Bus Stand (Bejai), or the airport. [1]

2. Public Bus (Budget Option)

- **Step 1:** Head to the State Bank Bus Terminus or KSRTC Bus Stand in Mangaluru.
- **Step 2:** Board a city/private bus heading towards **Kuppepadavu**, **Bajpe**, or **Kateel**.
- **Step 3:** Get down at the **Nellitheertha cross/bus stop**. If the bus terminates at Bajpe or Kuppepadavu, you will need to take a local auto-rickshaw for the remaining short distance to the temple.

The **best time of day to visit** to avoid crowds:

The best time of the day to visit Sri Somanatheshwara Guhalaya is **early morning between 7:30 AM and 9:30 AM**. [1]

Because the central attraction—the natural rock cave—is **only accessible from 7:30 AM to 1:00 PM**, arriving early ensures you have plenty of time to complete the required rituals before it gets crowded or too hot. [1, 2]

Why Early Morning is Ideal

- **Bathing Ritual:** You must take a mandatory holy dip in the outer temple pond (*Nagappa Kere*) and enter the cave in wet clothes. The fresh morning hours make this water ritual much more pleasant. [1, 2]
- **Avoid the Midday Crowd:** Crawling through a narrow, 200-meter cave can get stuffy and humid. Arriving early minimizes your wait time in line and makes navigating the low-ceiling paths cooler and less rushed. [1, 2]
- **Catch the Mahapuja:** Reaching early lets you explore the cave lake, pray to the inner Shivalinga, head back out to dry off, and comfortably catch the

primary temple's afternoon *Mahapuja* rituals before the complex closes at 1:00 PM. [1, 2]

Essential Cave Visit Checklist

- **Dress Code:** Traditional attire is strictly enforced. Men must wear a **dhoti/pancha** (no shirts or pants allowed inside the cave), while women should wear a **sari or salwar kameez**. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
- **Physical Requirement:** You will be crawling on your hands and knees for a significant portion of the cave. Wear clothes you do not mind getting wet and muddy. [1]

Some recommendations on **what to pack** for the cave crawl:

To prepare for the damp, muddy conditions of the 200-meter cave crawl, here is exactly what you need to pack and wear:

🎒 Clothing & Apparel

- **Change of Clothes:** Bring a complete set of fresh, dry traditional clothes to change into after your visit.
- **Towel:** Essential for drying off quickly after the mandatory holy pond bath and your muddy cave trek.
- **Plastic Bags:** Bring 2–3 waterproof bags to pack away your wet and mud-stained clothing.
- **Footwear Choice:** Slip-on sandals or flip-flops are best, as you must leave all footwear outside before entering the pond and cave area.

검 Traditional Dress Code Items

- **For Men:** Pack a **clean dhoti or pancha**. You must remove your shirt and pants before entering the water and the cave.
- **For Women:** Wear or pack a **traditional salwar kameez or sari**. Avoid heavy silk fabrics, as they get heavy and uncomfortable when wet.

🚫 What to Leave Behind (Do Not Bring Into the Cave)

- **Electronics:** Leave your phone, camera, and smartwatch in your vehicle or temple lockers; the cave is damp, and photography is strictly forbidden inside.
- **Bags and Wallets:** Keep your leather items, wallets, and backpacks outside to prevent them from getting waterlogged and muddy while crawling.
- **Torches:** Do not bring external flashlights. The temple provides minimal interior lighting to preserve the cave's natural habitat.

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Ref: Wikipedia

Nelliteertha Cave Temple

Nellitheertha Cave Temple entrance

Lord Somanatheshwara

Nellitheertha Cave Temple in Nellitheertha, Karnataka, India is dedicated to the Indian deity Somanatheshwara, or Shiva. The temple dates back to at least 1487 CE.[1]

To the right of the temple is a natural cave, about 200 metres (660 ft) long. Access is restricted, forcing visitors to crawl in on their knees. Inside, there is a lake and a Shiva Lingam.

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Ref: nellitheerthatemple.in

Sree Somanatheshwara Guhalaya, Nelliteertha, Mangalore

INTRODUCTION

The main deity of the temple is **Shree Somanatheshwara Guhalaya** *(Shiva)*. The temple also has **MahaGanapati** *(Elephant - headed God)* and **Jabali Maharshi** as deities here. In typical Tulu-naadu (Tulu is the native language in this part of the woods) tradition, the temple also has its set of **"Bhootas"**. Bhootas are considered as the **"Ganas"** or warrior-assistants of the Gods. According to mythology, bhootas are appointees of Shiva and they administer the temple/village. The main bhootas of the Nellitheertha temple are Pili-Chamundi (Pili means Tiger in Tulu), Kshetrapala, Raktheshwari and Doomavathy.

The Lingam of Shree Somanatheshwara has been made out of pure Saligrama and is considered very sacred. The Lingam has been built as Ardhanareeshwara. There are other artifacts in and around the temple which are pointers to the past glory of this place. Among them are the **"Arasule Mancha"** *(King's abode)*, **"Arasule Mancha"** *(King's abode)* and the **"Jina Vigraha"** *(Jain Statue)*.

To the east of the temple's entrance is the Amblattapadavu hillock. This hillock is about 300-500 feet high and offers a splendid scenery from the top. One can spot places such as the Bajpe Airport, Mangalore, Panambur, the MRPL refinery and Suratkal. On a day with clear skies, one can even spot the Arabian Sea. Amblattapadavu offers a wonderful view of sunrise and sunset everyday.

The **"Nagappa Kere"** *(Snake Pond)* is a small pond situated to the north of the temple. This natural pond, along with its religious significance, is also a scenic spot. All devotees who want to enter the cave temple have to clean themselves by taking bath in this pond and only then are they allowed into the cave. The lake is at its best immediately after the monsoons (Oct—Dec) when its crystal clear water is a swimmer's delight. There are plans to build a small herbal park around this pond as also a small deer park.

The **"Arasule Mancha"** or King's seat is situated near the main entrance of the temple towards the north. Historical evidence suggests that this seat was where the king of the land used to be seated when he visited the temple. It is believed that even today, the spirits of the former rulers visits the place at night and so it is prohibited to sit on the seat after dusk.

The Nellitheertha temple is a symbol of secularism. The temple and the cave is open to members of all beliefs and castes. Any person, above the age of 5, is allowed to enter the cave irrespective of gender. Truly, Nellitheertha is a special and model place.

HISTORY & ORIGIN

The holy place Nellitheertha and the temple have a long and glorious history. Although the first recorded material mentioning Nellitheertha dates back to **1487 A.D**, there is ample evidence available at the place to suggest that the temple existed much before that. At its glorious peak, there used to be daily festivities performed under the aegis of the ruler of Nellitheertha. From that grand state, the temple gradually declined and its existence itself was threatened towards the later part of the twentieth century. Since then, devotees and well wishers have got together to restore the temple toits previous grandeur. With the blessings of **Shree Somanatha**, the temple renovation work is now on in full swing.

In the state of Karnataka and indeed in entire India, the South Kanara district occupies a unique place. The evergreen forests, amazing flora and fauna, the numerous temples and places of worship and monuments all make this district a huge attraction. The lifestyle of the people here exemplifies the concept of unity in diversity. For the people of Dakshina Kannada, art worship is a means of reaching God and enriching the culture of the land. Naturally, therefore, one can observe the people seeing God in everything they do. Throughout the land, beautiful caves and lakes have become centers of spiritual and religious significance. Also, this land has given a multitude of scholars, artists, kings and other great contributors to the nation.

Historically, the Nellitheertha region was under the administration of the Chowta family. The chowtas are a famous name in Tulu Naadu and it is said that the temple flourished under their administration and was a major center for religious and cultural activities under their reign. Even today, the descendants of the chowta clan take an active interest in the maintenance and development of the temple. There are some artifacts and archeological evidence available at the temple which point to a Jain interest and influence at the temple. These are evidence to suggest that the temple and the region was probably under the administration of Jain kings of the region.

THE CAVE

The main attraction of the temple is the cave. Situated right at the entrance of the temple towards the left of the main door, this huge cave is one of nature's wonders. Unspoilt by human indulgence, the cave is a nature lover's delight. A visit to the inside of the cave is considered a sacred and spiritual experience by devotees. The entrance to the cave is huge and wide. Within a few feet, the trail narrows down and one is forced to bend and crawl forward. Subsequently, one has to fall flat on the tummy] and crawl ahead. Finally, after about 300-400 metres, the cave widens again and we find a huge lake in there. There is a natural Shiva Lingam in front of the lake and devotees pray and worship the lingam. The most amazing part of the cave is the fine quality of the mud available inside. It is said that the mud here has healing powers and is treated as prasadam by devotees. Right behind the Shiva Lingam, a second cave starts off. Not many people have ventured into this second cave till date. A few who have gone ahead vouch for the extreme terrain they have encountered. It surely will be challenging for the adventure lovers.

The name Nellitheertha also has its etymological roots in the cave. Inside of the cave, drops of water, in the shape of amla (gooseberries) constantly keep dripping down. In fact, the lake is made up of these drops of water. Hence the name Nelli (Amla) Theertha (holy water). Another unique aspect of the cave is that it is closed for nearly 6 months a year. The cave is open only between October and April. Though there are religious reasons associated with this (it is said that the cave is open 6 months a year for humans and is meant for Gods and Rishis the remaining 6 months), the point is that the 6 month break each year helps the cave to “rejuvenate”. The water freshens up and the animals inside enjoy the lack of disturbance. Yes, there are plenty of animals inside the cave. Most common among them are snakes (of all varieties), scorpions, porcupines and thousands of bats. These are considered sacred and troubling or hurting the animals in any manner is strictly forbidden.

Legend also has it that Maharshi (Saint) Jabali used this cave as his abode. Hence the name Jabaleshwara for the presiding deity. It is believed that Maharshi Jabali performed Tapas (penance) here to Lord Durgaparameshwari to request her to kill Arunasura (a demon). It is said that Sri Durga acceeded to Jabali's request and destroyed Arunasura at Kateel (another fabulous and famous temple town - very close to Nellitheertha). There is a spot inside the cave which is widely believed to be where Maharshi Jabali performed his Tapas.

THE BIRTH OF NELLITHEERTHA

The following is a narration of the story that led to the creation of the temple at Nellitheertha. Many of the incidents here can be linked to the rituals and customs being followed in the temple even to this day.

When Adharma Reared Its Ugly Head

In the early part of Kali-Yuga, according to the rules of time, Adharma (evil) started to show its ugly head all over the world. This became especially rampant in "Parashurama Kshetra" where lawlessness, murder, robbery, disregard for God became the order of the day and the lives of ordinary people became miserable. Just when things were getting completely out of control, Sage Narada, who is always working for world peace, decided it was time for some divine intervention and met Lord Shree Maha Vishnu, the proliferator of Dharma on this land. Lord Maha Vishnu consulted Lord Parameshwara (Shiva) and came to a conclusion on the action plan for restoration of Dharma on earth. Accordingly, under the stewardship of Lord Vishnu's vehicle Vasuki (Nagaraj or Snake God), Lord Shiva's ganas (assistants) or Bhootas namely Raktheshwari, Kshetrapala, Nandigona, Varahi, Barbaraka and Paashaanamurthy were sent to earth to operate from Parashurama Kshetra which stretched from the north of River Phalguni to the east of River Nandini.

Vasuki and the Ganas came to Parashurama Kshetra and settled down in a beautiful place called as Nagavana (snake forest). Here they tried to promulgate Dharma and Bhakti among the people for some time. But whether it was the influence of time or the effect of the land, the Ganas gradually changed and became arrogant and egoistic. They came under the false belief that they were mightier than Eshwara (God) himself and this reflected upon their activities which ventured off the path of Dharma. Adharma started to rise again.

Maharshi Jabali

The great Sage Jabali was performing penance for world peace on the banks of the river Bhagirathi near a place called Thataaka. One day, Sage Narada approached him and asked him thus "O Sage Jabali! What is the purpose of this penance? What do you want to achieve? On the one hand, you have been responsible for the proliferation of evil forces and here on the other hand, you are performing penance for world peace. This dual strategy of yours really perplexes me". Sage Jabali was surprised at the comments of Sage Narada and asked him "O Great Sage Narada! You work for world peace day and night and are aware of everything. What then is the reason for such comments from you? Since both our intentions are the same, wouldn't straight talk be more appropriate here?" Sage Narada replied thus "That demon Arunasura upon whom you so kindly bestowed your blessings and advised the Gayathri Mantra (the most sacred mantra for Hindus, which carries the essence of the Vedas), is now using the same for the destruction of Dharma on earth. Evil forces are gaining ground on earth and Bhakti is coming down.

Unethical and immoral activities are increasing day by day. Because of the power of the Gayathri Mantra, even the Trimurties (the holy trinity of the Hindus- Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) are also powerless to destroy him". This update from Sage Narada put Sage Jabali in a worry. He said "Sage Narada! Please advise me on a way to end this menace". To this, Sage Narada replied "O Maharshi! Just as you were responsible for the rise of Arunasura, so you shall also be responsible for his downfall. Though this may sound paradoxical, it is Bhagavat-Sankalpa (divine-decision). Therefore, you please proceed to Parashurama Kshetra and perform penance for pleasing Lord Shakti on the banks of the river Nandini. Lord Shakti alone can destroy Arunasura. There is a place called Nagavana near river Nandini which is ideally suited for your mission". Sage Jabali agreed to this and also

indicated that he would take along river Ganga along with him for this purpose. Having triggered the destruction of evil, Sage Narada wished that all ends well and proceeded.

Jabali prays to Ganga and Lord Shiva

Sage Jabali performed penance and Mother Ganga appeared before him fully pleased with his penance. Sage Jabali explained his mission of having to go to Parashurama Kshetra and requested Ganga to join him in this holy mission. Having listened to Sage Jabali's plea, Ganga replied thus "O Noble Sage! I fully admire your concern for societal health and well being. But I am helpless. I have certain problems because of which I will not be able to accompany you right away. Are you aware of them? Earlier, when Vasundhara was unable to handle my flow, Lord Shiva had to provide shelter to me in his locks. In the same way, South India cannot handle the severity of my flow. But I cannot disappoint devotees like you. Therefore, I will suggest a way out of this. If you sit down and perform penance to please Lord Shiva for your activities, I promise that I shall appear there as Antar-Ganga (appearing from underground). Thus I shall make the land holy".

Sage Jabali was immensely pleased and performed penance to please Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva was very pleased and appeared before the Sage. He said "O Maharshi! Though it is a well established fact that Adharma abounds in Kali-Yuga, it sometimes gets out of hand. It is our duty to destroy such evil and protect Dharma. The destruction of those evil forces which is not possible either through the power of boons or through the power of mantras is possible through strategy and planning alone. Arunasura has pleased Lord Shakti through the power of the Gayathri Mantra thus making his destruction an impossible task for us". Hearing this, Sage Jabali was shaken a bit. He pleaded thus "Lord! What is the way out of this maze? There is no way that peace can be established on earth if Arunasura is not destroyed". Lord Shiva took mercy and spoke thus "Jabali! If you are ready to lead this effort, I am ready to help you in this. Listen. You, along with Ganga, proceed immediately to Nagavana in Parashurama Kshetra. There is a beautiful cave at that place. Perform severe penance in the cave and please Lord Shakti. If she is pleased with you, your wishes will come true. In order to protect you and to ensure that your penance is not disturbed, I shall send along two of my Ganas with you. Vyaghra Chamundi and Doomavathy shall accompany you".

Jabali reaches Nagavana

Upon receiving Sage Narada's advice and Lord Shiva's order and having realized that both of them had suggested that Shree Shakti is alone the way out for this problem, it dawned upon Sage Jabali that the time for appeasement of Shakti had arrived. He traveled southward along with Shiva's ganas and reached a forest which was full of Bilva trees.

Sage Jabali was amazed at what he saw. He was astounded at the marvelous site of the cave. Beautiful trees, creeps and flowers adorned the entire area. The sweet voices of the birds, the peaceful co-existence of animals and the aroma of the forest immensely pleased the Sage. He found great spiritual solace at the place. His determination to succeed in the cause as also the devotion in his heart for the Lord increased manifold. Sage Jabali quickly

realized that this was the place suggested by the Lord and decided to perform severe penance at this very spot.

At the same spot, Vasuki and the other ganas of Shiva had been residing since a long time. Kshetrapala, who saw these strangers occupying the place, fell suspicious and immediately reported the matter to Vasuki. The arrogant Vasuki did not think over the matter and immediately ordered his assistants Raktheshwari, Varahi, Nandigona, Barbaraka and Paashanamurthy to interrogate the strangers on the matter.

Vyaghra Chamundi (also known as Pili-Chamundi in Tulu language) saw the Bhootas approaching them. He smelt a craving for war in their intentions. He stopped them midway and said "O Bhootas! We are no different from you people. Our intentions are quite similar to yours. We have also been sent by Lord Shiva to establish Dharma on this land. Since you are also residing here with the same intentions, what is the need for an altercation between us. You have forgotten your duty and become arrogant under the influence of power. Get over the veil of ego that has engulfed and join hands with us in restoring truth on this land". Upon listening to this request from Pili-Chamundi, reality dawned upon Raktheshwari and Kshetrapala and they immediately became assistants to the Sage. **(Even to this day, services are offered to Raktheshwari and Kshetrapala in the form of Nemas and Parvas)**.

But no such changes took place in Varahi, Nandigona, Barbaraka and Paashanamurthy. They attacked Doomavathy and Vyaghra Chamundi. A fierce war ensued and Doomavathy and Pili-Chamundi reached the brink of defeat. At this stage, Sage Jabali himself stepped in. The Bhootas were no match for the divine power of the Sage. They were defeated and they ran back to Vasuki. The arrogant Vasuki himself came to war with Jabali. He had lost his sense of reason and was incapable of judging the greatness of the Sage. He spoke ill of the Sage and disrespected him. This enraged Sage Jabali and he said "O Nagaraj! You forget the divinity of Hari and Hara. You are discounting us and our intentions of world peace. I hereby curse you that you shall have no existence on earth".

Vasuki was shocked at the curse. The cloud of ignorance that had blocked his senses waned off. Reality dawned upon him. He prostrated before the Sage and begged for forgiveness for himself and the other ganas. Seeing Vasuki realize his mistake and purify himself in the fire of repentance, the Sage's anger vanished and he took mercy on him. Sage Jabali said "O Vasuki! What can I do. A Sage's curse can never be revoked. But it can definitely be altered. Your existence has been destroyed by a Brahmin's anger. But in due time, Lord Parameshwara will make this place his abode and will appear here in the form of a Lingam. Further, devotees will build a beautiful temple for him here. When poojas, yaganas and other practices as prescribed by Dharma start happening here again, you shall gain your existence back again". Vasuki and the other ganas felt happy at this and joined hands with the rest of them to aid in establishing Dharma.

Sage Jabali entered the cave and was astounded by its beauty. He proceeded towards the inside of the temple fully enjoying the natural beauty of the landscape. As promised, River Ganga appeared there from within and started flowing. Sage Jabali said "Ganga flows from Lord Shiva's head. Ganga flows from Kashi. And now, Ganga flows in Nagavana. O Lord! No one can predict your divine intentions". At that moment, Lord Shiva appeared inside the cave

in the form of a Lingam. Seeing all this happen, Sage Jabali felt a great energy flow within him and he sat down to perform penance to please Lord Adi Shakti.

Developments at Ekaveeradripura

At Ekaveeradripura, Arunasura was ruling the land according to his Rakshasa Dharma. His rule was evil and he was a terror for his citizens. Earlier, he had obtained the Gayathri Mantra from Sage Jabali and had used it to please Lord Adi Shakti. He had obtained a boon from Lord Adi Shakti that he cannot be killed even by the Trimurtis. Using that boon, he had conquered Swarga, Martya and Patala lokas (Heaven, Earth and the Nether lands).

As per the wishes of the divine, Sage Narada, who is constantly working towards establishment of Dharma, realized that the time to put an end to Arunasura had arrived and that he had a role to play in it. He approached Arunasura's palace. The demon welcomed Sage Narada and offered him all the obliterations. The demon asked the Sage thus "O Maharshi! I am blessed by your arrival. Please do let me know the reason for your visit". Sage Narada laughed and said "Arunasura! I took pity upon seeing your ignorance and decided to visit you. I am sure I can call you a fool going by your actions". This made Arunasura angry and he said "O Narada! Instead of pricking me with your skeptical statements, please come straight to the point and help me clarify the doubts in my mind". Sage Narada said "O King of the Rakshasas! There is a fire burning in your palace and you are still unaware of it. That very person who advised you on the Gayathri Mantra is now working overtime to ensure your destruction. Sage Jabali is performing a severe penance at Nagavana and he is trying to please Lord Shakti. Do not delay even a little. Proceed immediately to stop his penance. Else, your end is guaranteed".

Arunasura was outraged listening to this story and he immediately ordered two of his trusted lieutenants- Chanda and Prachanda to proceed towards Nagavana and spoil Sage Jabali's penance. Chanda and Prachanda took along a huge army with them and attacked Nagavana. A fierce battle ensued between the Rakshasas and the Bhootas. The Rakshasas reached the brink of defeat and retreated. But soon, they came back like waves of the ocean. This time they were under the leadership of Arunasura himself. They completely surrounded Nagavana. This alerted Kshetrapala and he realized the gravity of the situation. He immediately entered the cave and spoke to Sage Jabali- "O Lord! A fierce war is happening between us and Arunasura's army. At any time now, the Rakshasas may enter the cave and put an end to your penance. Therefore, you please proceed towards the east using the secret exit in the cave. There you please perform the Chandika Yagna (the biggest and grandest yagna for Lord Shakti) and appease Lord Shakti".

Sage Jabali's mind was at the crossroads. On one side was the impending trouble from the Rakshasas, on the other hand Lord Adi Shakti had not yet appeared. And then there was the suggestion from Kshetrapala. Under pressure, Sage Jabali meditated and thought for a while. It dawned upon the Sage that if Lord Adi Shakti wished to appear only through the Chandika Yagna, then that has to be the adopted route. So, as per directions from Kshetrapala, Sage Jabali exits the cave and reaches a place called Mallikavana. Finding it an equally beautiful place, Sage Jabali decides to peform the Yagna there. The Trimurtis, the Devas and the Bhootas stand as guards for the Yagna.

Upon not finding Sage Jabali inside the cave, Arunasura is very agitated and thinks he has been cheated by Sage Narada. He starts indiscriminately killing Rishis and Sages as revenge. His end is nearing!!

Adi Shakti Obliges!

The yagna being performed at Mallikavana had no match in history. It was a litmus test for the devotion of Sage Jabali. It was a yagna being performed for world peace. Right at the time of the Poornahuti (the offering towards the completion of the yagna), Lord Adi Shakti appeared right at the middle of the fire with a pleasant smile on her face. When asked the reason for the yagna, Sage Jabali narrated the entire story and pleaded for her intervention. Lord Adi Shakti said "O Devotees! Let there be no fear. This day has come upon us because of the mistake of advising a Rakshasa with the Gayathri Mantra without giving a thought to the gravity of the consequence of such an action. But he has acted according to his birth qualities. Even then, he is my true devotee. He has been worshipping me every day with complete devotion. Hence I shall create a separate environment where he will reach the brink of his bad deeds. Near a place called Kati on the banks of the river Nandini, I shall take the form of a Brahmari (bee) and kill him. **(This sacred place is now called Kateel where Lord Adi Shakti took the form of a bee and killed Arunasura. The God is worshipped as Lord Durgaparameshwari here. It is one of the most sacred places of South India)**".

Lord Shakti continued addressing her devotees "O Parameshwara! You may reside at the place where Sage Jabali performed penance. Appear there in the form of a Lingam and bless the devotees with their wishes **(This place is Nagavana or Nellitheertha where Lord Shiva resides as Lord Shree Somanatheshwara)**. O Ganga! You may flow in the cave for six months a year and help people get rid of their sins. You may get back to Kashi for the other six months. Let this place be called as Dakshina Kashi (Kashi of the South). O Vishnu! You may appear in the nearby place called Kovalapura and bless the devotees **(This place, called Kompadavu, is close to Nellitheertha and has a beautiful Vishnu temple)**. Since the holy Chandika Yagna was performed at Mallikavana, I shall appear there in the form of Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswathi and shall bless all those who pray to me **(This place, called Mucchur, is adjoining Nellitheertha)"**.

This same place Nagavana, due to the goose berry shaped water drops falling from the roof of the cave, came to be known as Nelli-Theertha (Gooseberry-Holy water). It is believed that Sages and gods occupy the cave for six months and hence, even to this day, humans are allowed to enter the cave only six months a year (from October to April).

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An Appeal:

Hon Members:

Sri Dr Mohan Alva,
Alvas Education Foundation, Moodabidare

Sri Kuldeep M,
Hereditary Managing Trustee,
Puttige Mahalothhara Somanatheshwara Temple, Moodabidare,

Dharmadarshi Sri Harikrishna Punaroonu,
Former President, Kannada Sahitya Parishat, Mulki

Sri Pradeep Kumar Kalkura,
Former President, Dakshina Kannada Sahitya Parishat, Kadri, Mangalore

Sri Bhuvanabhirama Udupa,
Editor, Yugapurusha, Kinnigoli

Sri Raghavendra Achar,
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Sri A S N Hebbar, Advocate, Kundapura

Sri P Ramadas,
ACE Manufacturing Systems, Bengaluru

Sri Sripathi Bhat, Industrialist, Moodabidare

Sri Dattatreya Guru, Bengaluru

Sri Dr B S Kakkilaya,
Prashanthi Nursing Home, Mandya

Sri Ramaprasad,
Hotel Udupi Garden, Kasaragod

Sri Yajna Narayan Kammaje,
Sona Group, Bengaluru

Sri Sripathi Rao,
Social Worker, Bengaluru

Sri Vasantha Bhat,
Mangaluru

Sri Vadiraja Bhat,
Managing Trustee, OSAAT, Bengaluru

Sri Raghavendra Shastri,
Sharavu Ganapathi Temple

Renovation Committee :

Treasurer: Sri N Venkatanja Bhat, Nellitheertha
Secretary: Sri Yashwant K, Kaikad

Committee Members :

Sri Prasanna Bhat Santrabailu, Sri Santosh Kumar Neerude
Sri Ananda Kava Santrabailu , Srimati Latamma Nellitheertha
Sri Deep Kiran Saliyan Karambaru, Sri N V Gopala Krishna Bhat Nellitheertha
Sri Hariprasad Nellitheertha, Sri Satyaprasad Shibaraya Santrabailu
Sri Jayasheela Koliyan Neerude, Sri Janardana Gowda Kompadavu
Sri Hariprakash Nellitheertha, Sri Purandara Shetty Santrabailu
Sri Bhoja Karkera Nellitheertha

Advisory Committee :

Sri Santosh Kumar Hegde Muchur
Sri Jagannatha Kotian Kompadavu
Sri Janardana Gowda Kana Muchur
Sri Krishna Prasad Omkara Kate
Sri Surendra Kava Kompadavu, Sri Ramachandra Kava Santrabailu
Sri Sadashiva Shetty Mura, Sri Gangadhara Shetty Santrabailu
Sri Krishna Amin Perara, Sri Satish Bandale
Sri Yadava Kotian Permude, Sri Ratnakara Shetty Yekkar
Sri Monappa Shetty Yekkar, Sri Nitin Kava Yekkar
Sri Muktananda Shetty Muchur, Sri Shyam Shetty Yekkar
Sri Divakara Poojari Yekkar, Sri Narasimha Shetty Muchur
Sri Vidyadhara Hegde Muchur, Sri Appu Gowda Gurikara Kompadavu Bail- Bettugutu
Sri Jagannatha Chowta Manja Muchur, Sri Dayananda Shetty Kaidumaru Guttu Muchur
Sri Hemanatha Shetty Kathelsar

Special Advisors :

Vedamurthi Sri Nellitheertha Srinivasa Bhat
Vedamurthi Sri Vasanta Bhat Nellitheertha
Vedamurthi Sri Prashant Adiga Kampaciavu Sri Vishnumurthi Temple
Sri Ganapati Bhat, Archakaru, Somanatheshwara Temple, Nellitheertha
Sri G Rajendra Shakti Daily, Madikeri
Sri Vaidyanathan, ANZ IT, Bengaluru
Sri N V Sripathi Bhat, Bengaluru
Sri N V Ramesh Bhat, Parupattegararu, Ramanathapura Subramanya Temple
Sri N V Umesh Bhat, Bengaluru
Sri N V Krishna Bhat, Bengaluru
Sri Ranganatha Rao, Bengaluru
Sri Dr N S Vadiraj Bhat, Mangaluru
Sri N V Guruprasad, Bengaluru
Sri N G Hemanth Nellitheertha, Bangaluru
Sri N S Vasudev Bhat, Bengaluru
Sri N S Anirkumar Bhat, Bengaluru
Sri Aresh Bhat, Bengaluru
The Archakas, Tantris and Villagers of Nellitheertha

Your contributions may please be credited to the following bank account.

Shri Somantheshwara Temple Jeernodhara Samithi,
Account Details: Karnataka Bank, Alkala Branch, Dakshina Kannada
S.B Account Number: 0122500100786201
IFSC Code: KARB0000012

(Kindly inform details of your contribution vide email ID : vbnellitheertha@yahoo.com or WhatsApp number +91 8088708914)

Shree Somanatheshwara Guhalaya

(Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Karnataka)

Shree Kshetra Nellitheertha

Post : Neerude, Kompadavu Village, Mangaluru Taluk, D.K District - 574144
Telephone: 0824-2299142, Mobile : +91 8088708914

Appeal Towards Temple Renovation

Renovation Committee and Executive Committee
Email : vbnellitheertha@yahoo.com

Shree Somanatheshwara Guhalaya

(Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Karnataka)

Shree Kshetra Nellitheertha

An Appeal

Dear Devotees,

Amongst the numerous Tirthakshetras in Bharata, Nellitheertha holds a special and elevated status. Due to the power of the Tapas performed by Rishis and Saints, there exists the presence of Lord Shiva in the form of a Shivalinga inside a cave here. Historical records show that this place has existed under the administration of the Chowta Arasus of Moodabidare and has a recorded history of more than 700 years! An ancient Somanatheshwara temple, along with Lord Ganapati, exists here and is beautifully encroached on one side by mother nature in the form of the entrance to the cave. Till recently, this special jewel amongst the religious and spiritual places of Tulu Nadu was not so well known. However, this has changed recently.

Inside the cave, at about a distance of 200 metres, there exists a beautiful pond. It is believed that Ganga, flowing via the locks of Lord Shiva, has its presence in this pond. It has been experienced that those who take bath in this pond with devotion get rid of many diseases. The soil available around the pond has medicinal properties too. Devotees take bath in the pond and then offer water on the head of the Shiva Linga that is seated in a natural pedestal. The darshana of Lord Somanatheshwara and Sage Jabali inside the cave is indeed a divine and unforgettable experience. People experience a surge in their spiritual energy when they spend time in this temple.

In the recent years, due to the contributions and efforts of devotees, the renovation of the Shree Somanatheshwara temple has taken place in the years 1985, 2005 and 2014. Due to this, the inner prakara of the temple is in reasonably good shape. However, the number of devotees who are visiting the temple and taking bath inside the cave is steadily increasing, year after year. Along with this, the number of requests for conducting religious and dharmika events, including shodasha samskaras, in the temple, is going up consistently. Visitors from the district, and from other places, is showing a consistent upward trend.

Due to these reasons, it has become paramount to provide basic facilities and infrastructure for visiting devotees and for the religious events that take place. In order to make these facilities possible, a committee for the repair and renovation of the temple has been constituted. The necessary plans and budget estimates for these works have been prepared and submitted to the Hindu Religious Institutions And Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Karnataka. The approval of the Government authorities have been duly obtained vide order number DVS:MSC:CR 229/2023/292129/F3 dated 21-02-2024. It has been estimated that an amount of Rupees 2.25 Crores shall be required to successfully complete all the planned works. We hope to complete the planned works within the next two years and be able to perform the Brahmakalasha rituals during 2026-2027.

We request all large-hearted devotees to contribute generously to this noble cause and obtain the blessings of Lord Somanatha and Lord Ganapati.

Approximate Estimations for the Temple Renovation

Details	Approx (in Lakhs)	
New office building (2 floors)	-	13.50
Repair of the Temple well	-	00.75
New Bathroom	-	00.75
Renovation of cave entrance	-	02.50
New roof for the outer prakara		
East side	-	11.00
West side	-	04.00
North side	-	04.00
South side	-	02.50
New stairs for the Naga sannidhana	-	01.50
Suttu Pouli for the outer prakara		
West side	-	11.00
North side	-	20.00
New Jabali sannidhana	-	09.00
Storeroom (west side)	-	20.00
Toilets (west side)	-	15.00
New function hall	-	70.00
Stairs for the Lord's abhisheka well	-	02.00
New rooms (for seva kartas and temple staff)	-	30.00
Total estimate	-	217.50

Note:

1. Devotees are requested to take up the financial responsibility for any of the above mentioned works in totality.
2. It has been decided to enshrine names of people contributing more than 1 lakh on a granite stone board.
3. The Suttu Powlis require approximately 20 stone pillars. The cost of each pillar is approximately Rs 50,000. Devotees are requested to sponsor the cost of one or more of these pillars.
4. The cost of the rooms for seva-kartas and staff can be separately borne as well. Devotees are requested to enquire about the same in the temple office.

Guidance and Supervision Committee:

Hon Presidents :

Sri Sri Sri Vishwaprasanna Tirtha Swamiji
Pejavara Adhokshaja Matha, Udupi

Vedamurthi Sri Vasudeva Asranna
Hereditary Archaka,
Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple

Vedamurthi Sri Lakshmi Narayana Asranna
Hereditary Archaka,
Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple

***

Ref: ChatGpt

Sree Somanatheshwara Guhalaya, Nelliteertha, Mangalore

1. Location

Sri Nellitheertha Cave Temple is an ancient cave shrine dedicated to **Lord Shiva**, situated amidst thick forests and rocky hills at **Nellitheertha**, near **Kudupu**, about **20 km northeast of Mangaluru** in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka.

- **District:** Dakshina Kannada
- **Nearest City:** Mangaluru (Mangalore)
- **State:** Karnataka
- **Altitude:** Approximately 150 m above sea level

The temple is nestled inside a natural limestone cave and is surrounded by lush greenery, making it one of Karnataka's most picturesque cave temples.

2. How to Reach

By Air

- Nearest Airport: **Mangaluru International Airport**
- Distance: Approximately 25 km

By Rail

Nearest railway stations:

- Mangaluru Central
- Mangaluru Junction

Both stations are well connected to major Indian cities.

By Road

Regular buses and taxis are available from:

- Mangaluru
- Kudupu
- Moodbidri
- Bantwal

The final stretch involves a short walk through forest paths leading to the cave.

3. Specialty of the Temple

Nellitheertha is famous for:

- One of Karnataka's oldest natural cave temples.
- Ancient self-manifested (Swayambhu) Shiva Linga.
- Underground perennial spring.
- Crystal-clear holy water flowing throughout the year.
- Natural cave formation with stalactites and stalagmites.
- Cool cave atmosphere even during peak summer.
- Scenic forest surroundings.
- Popular pilgrimage during Mahashivaratri.
- Ideal destination for spiritual seekers and nature lovers.

4. History and Legends

Although no exact historical records are available, local traditions state that the temple has existed for many centuries.

According to legend:

A great sage performed severe penance inside this cave. Lord Shiva appeared before him and manifested Himself as a Shiva Linga.

The cave later became a place of meditation for many saints and yogis.

Another legend says that the cave contains sacred underground water blessed by Lord Shiva Himself.

The name **"Nellitheertha"** is believed to originate from:

- **Nelli** = Indian Gooseberry (Amla)
- **Theertha** = Sacred water

It is believed that many Amla trees once grew around the sacred spring.

5. Architecture

Unlike conventional temples, this shrine is entirely natural.

Important features include:

- Natural limestone cave
- Narrow entrance
- Rock chambers

- Uneven cave floor
- Natural ceiling formations
- Sacred spring flowing through the cave
- Simple stone platform
- Ancient Shiva Linga
- Small shrine for Nandi

The cave extends several metres inside the hill.

Visitors often need to bend while walking through certain portions.

6. Main Deity

Sri Nellitheertheshwara (Lord Shiva)

The Shiva Linga is regarded as:

- Swayambhu (Self-manifested)
- Highly sacred
- Worshipped for centuries

7. Sub-Deities

Depending on local arrangements, devotees may also worship:

- Nandi
- Lord Ganesha
- Goddess Parvati
- Nagaraja (Serpent Deity)
- Navagrahas

Some of these shrines are located outside the cave.

8. Sacred Theertha

One of the unique attractions is the perennial holy spring.The water:

- Flows naturally throughout the year.
- Is crystal clear.
- Remains cool even in summer.
- Is considered sacred by devotees.
- Is believed to possess healing properties according to local faith.

Many devotees collect the holy water.

9. Daily Rituals and Poojas

Typical daily worship includes:

- Suprabhata Seva
- Abhisheka
- Rudrabhisheka
- Alankara
- Archana
- Deeparadhana
- Mangalarathi
- Distribution of Prasada

10. Pooja Charges

The temple management may revise charges periodically.

Common Sevas include:

- Archana
- Rudrabhisheka
- Panchamrutha Abhisheka
- Bilvarchane
- Special Alankara
- Maha Mangalarathi

Devotees are advised to contact the temple office for the latest rates.

11. Festivals Celebrated

Major festivals include:

Mahashivaratri

The biggest annual festival with thousands of devotees.

Shravana Mondays

Special Shiva worship throughout the Shravan month.

Kartika Deepotsava

Lighting of lamps and special prayers.

Pradosha Puja

Observed twice every lunar month.

Nagara Panchami

Special worship for serpent deities.

12. Facilities for Devotees

Available facilities generally include:

- Drinking water
- Parking
- Footwear stand
- Resting area
- Basic toilets
- Small shops selling flowers and coconuts
- Prasada counter

Accommodation is limited at the temple itself. Most pilgrims stay in **Mangaluru**, where a wide range of hotels is available.

13. Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Dress modestly.
- Maintain silence inside the cave.
- Carry a torch if needed (lighting may vary).
- Walk carefully, as rocks may be slippery.
- Follow temple instructions.
- Keep the surroundings clean.

Don'ts

- Do not litter.
- Avoid loud conversations.
- Do not damage natural rock formations.
- Avoid plastic waste.
- Photography inside the cave may be restricted; follow temple rules.

14. Nearby Temples

- Sri Kudupu Anantha Padmanabha Temple
- Kadri Manjunatha Temple
- Kudroli Gokarnanatheshwara Temple
- Mangaladevi Temple
- Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple
- Polali Rajarajeshwari Temple
- Kudupu Sri Ananthapadmanabha Temple

15. Nearby Tourist Attractions

- Pilikula Nisargadhama
- Panambur Beach
- Tannirbhavi Beach
- Sultan Battery
- Sammilan Shetty Butterfly Park
- Moodbidri Jain Basadis
- St. Aloysius Chapel
- Mangaluru City

16. Nearby Hotels

In Mangaluru:

- Hotel Deepa Comforts
- Ocean Pearl
- Goldfinch Hotel
- Avatar Hotel
- AJ Grand Hotel
- Ginger Hotel
- Numerous budget lodges and homestays

17. Temple Timings

Typically:

- **Morning:** 7:00 AM – 12:00 Noon
- **Evening:** 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Timings may vary during festivals and special occasions.

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18. Contact Information

As management details may change over time, devotees are advised to verify the latest contact information through local sources or the temple administration before planning special poojas or group visits.

19. Best Time to Visit

- October to February – Pleasant weather.
- Shravan month – Special Shiva worship.
- Mahashivaratri – Grand celebrations.
- Early morning – Peaceful atmosphere.
- Avoid heavy monsoon days if trekking paths become slippery.

20. Spiritual Significance

Nellitheertha Cave Temple beautifully combines **nature, spirituality, and ancient Shaiva tradition**. The serene cave, the self-manifested Shiva Linga, and the ever-flowing sacred spring create an atmosphere ideal for meditation and devotion. Pilgrims often describe the experience of worship inside the cool, dimly lit cave as deeply peaceful and spiritually uplifting.

Interesting Facts

- One of the few natural cave Shiva temples in Karnataka.
- The cave contains a perennial freshwater spring.
- The Shiva Linga is believed to be **Swayambhu** (self-manifested).
- The cave remains naturally cool throughout the year.
- The site is surrounded by dense vegetation and rich biodiversity.
- Mahashivaratri attracts devotees from Karnataka and neighbouring Kerala.
- The temple is especially revered by seekers who enjoy meditation in natural settings.

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Ref: Google Gemini

Sri Somanatheshwara Guhalaya (Nellitheertha Cave Temple)

Location

Located at **Nellitheertha**, Kuppepadavu Post, Dakshina Kannada District, Karnataka.

- **Distance from Mangalore:** ~25 km
- **Distance from Kateel:** ~8 km
- **Distance from Bajpe Airport (IXE):** ~12 km

How to Get There

- **By Bus:** Regular KSRTC and private buses run from Mangalore Bus Stand (State Bank/KSRTC) heading towards Bajpe, Kateel, or Kuppepadavu. You can drop off at Kuppepadavu or Muchur and take an auto-rickshaw to Nellitheertha.
- **By Train:** The nearest major railway station is **Mangalore Central (MAQ)** or **Mangalore Junction (MAJN)**, around 25–28 km away.
- **By Air: Mangalore International Airport (IXE)** at Bajpe is the nearest airport (~12 km). Taxis are easily available from the airport.
- **By Private Vehicle/Taxi:** Drive via the Mangalore–Bajpe road, proceeding towards Muchur/Kuppepadavu.

Speciality of this Temple

- **The Wonder Cave (Guhalaya):** The temple's defining feature is a natural, 200-meter-long cave located to the right of the main shrine.
- **Crawl to Pray:** The cave's roof is very low; devotees must crawl on their knees/hands through pitch darkness and mud for about 200 meters to reach the inner natural sanctum containing a water body and a Lingam.
- **Seasonal Access:** The cave is open to the public for **only 6 months a year**—typically from *Dhanu Sankranti* (mid-October) to *Mesha Sankranti* (mid-April).

It remains closed during the monsoon and summer breeding seasons to protect the native fauna (bats, porcupines, harmless snakes).

- **Natural 'Nelli' Water:** Inside the cave, water constantly drips from stalactites in tiny droplets resembling *Nelli* (Gooseberry/Amla), which collect to form a sacred pond (*Theertha*).

History and Legends

- **Inscriptional History:** Written records mentioning the temple date back to at least **1487 CE**, though oral tradition suggests it is much older.
- **Sage Jabali's Penance:** According to local lore (*Sthala Purana*), Maharshi Jabali performed intense *Tapas* (penance) inside this cave to appease Goddess Durga Parameshwari.
- **Connection to Kateel:** Pleased by Jabali's devotion, Goddess Durga appeared and assured him she would slay the demon Arunasura (which she later did at Kateel as a swarm of bees). She also blessed the region, stating that Lord Shiva (at Nellitheertha), Lord Vishnu (at Kompadavu), and She Herself (at Muchur & Kateel) would reside in close proximity to guard the land.

Architecture

- Built in the classical **Tulu Nadu (Coastal Karnataka) style**, featuring sloping tiled roofs designed to withstand heavy rains, wooden pillared halls (*Mantapas*), and a compact stone *Garbhagriha* (sanctum sanctorum).
- **Arasule Mancha (King's Seat):** A stone throne/platform near the entrance historically used by local chieftains/kings when visiting.
- **Nagappa Kere:** A picturesque natural sacred pond situated just outside the temple complex used by devotees for purification baths before entering the cave.

Main Deity and Sub-Deities

- **Main Deity: Sri Somanatheshwara** (Lord Shiva), represented as a sacred *Saligrama Shila Lingam* configured as *Ardhanareeshwara*.
- **Sub-Deities:**
    - **Maha Ganapati**
    - **Jabali Maharshi Brindavana**
    - **Daivas / Bhootas (Protector Spirits):** Pili-Chamundi, Kshetrapala, Raktheshwari, and Doomavathy.

Daily Rituals, Poojas & Charges

(Note: Charges are nominal and regulated by the temple trust; subject to periodic updates.)

- **Temple Timings:**
    - Morning: **6:00 AM – 1:00 PM**
    - Evening: **5:00 PM – 8:00 PM**
- **Daily Rituals:** Morning *Usha Pooja*, Afternoon *Mahapooja* (around 12:30 PM followed by *Anna Santharpana* / Prasadam meal), and Evening *Ranga Pooja* / *Nisha Pooja*.
- **Basic Pooja Charges:**
    - **Archana / Ashtothara:** ~₹20 – ₹50
    - **Rudra Abhisheka:** ~₹100 – ₹250
    - **Ksheera (Milk) Abhisheka:** ~₹50 – ₹100
    - **Karthika Pooja / Lamp Service:** ~₹100 – ₹300

Special Poojas & Charges

- **Gana Homa:** Performed at the Mahaganapati shrine (~₹500 – ₹1,500 depending on scale).
- **Ranga Pooja:** Elaborate evening lamp decoration service (~₹1,000 – ₹2,500).
- **Naga Pooja / Ashlesha Bali:** Performed for serpent-related vows near the Nagappa Kere (~₹500 – ₹2,000).
- **Sathyanarayana Pooja:** Offered on specific festival/full moon days (~₹300 – ₹700).

Festivals Celebrated

- **Annual Temple Jathre (Vardhananthi / Car Festival):** Celebrated with grand pomp, typically during the months of December/January.
- **Maha Shivaratri:** All-night poojas, continuous chanting, and heavy footfall of devotees.
- **Laksha Deepotsava:** Lighting of thousands of oil lamps around the temple during Karthika Masa.
- **Nagara Panchami:** Special rituals offered at the shrine and near Nagappa Kere.
- **Dhanurmasam Rituals:** Daily early-morning poojas throughout the month of Dhanu.

Facilities Available for Devotees

- **Anna Prasadam (Free Lunch):** Offered daily to all visiting devotees after the afternoon Mahapooja (~12:30 PM to 2:00 PM).
- **Bathing & Changing Facilities:** Available near *Nagappa Kere* for devotees who take a holy dip before entering the cave.
- **Accommodation:** Very limited basic guest rooms are managed directly by the temple trust for pilgrims. Most visitors prefer staying in Mangalore city or near Kateel.

Do’s and Don’ts

Do's

- **Take a Holy Dip:** Wash your feet or take a full bath in *Nagappa Kere* before entering the cave.
- **Wear Minimal/Sacred Clothing:** Men usually enter the cave wearing only a wet *dhoti* or simple shorts; women wear comfortable clothing suitable for crawling through wet clay/mud.
- **Carry Spare Clothes:** Keep a change of fresh dry clothes for after your cave journey.
- **Maintain Silence & Sanctity:** Respect the natural, quiet environment inside the cave.

Don'ts

- **No Artificial Lighting:** Torches, flashlights, and mobile phone cameras/flashes are strictly prohibited inside the cave to avoid disturbing roosting bats and wildlife.
- **Do Not Harm Wildlife:** The cave houses bats, harmless snakes, insects, and porcupines. Do not touch, provoke, or harm any creature.
- **No Footwear:** Shoes/sandals must be left outside the main temple premises.
- **Do Not Sit on 'Arasule Mancha':** Sitting on the ancient king's throne after dusk is strictly forbidden due to local traditional beliefs.

Nearby Temples

1. **Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple (~8 km):** Famous river temple located on an island in the Nandini River.
2. **Muchur Sri Durga Parameshwari Temple (~3 km):** Closely linked with the Nellitheertha legend.
3. **Kompadavu Sri Vishnu Temple (~5 km):** The third temple mentioned in the legend of Sage Jabali.
4. **Polali Rajarajeshwari Temple (~18 km):** Ancient temple renowned for its massive clay idols.

Nearby Hotels & Dining

- **Budget/Mid-range Stays:** Available near **Kateel** (e.g., Mahalakshmi Residency, Sri Durga International) or **Bajpe**.
- **Luxury Stays:** A wide range of 3-star to 5-star hotels are available in **Mangalore City** (~25 km) (e.g., The Gateway Hotel, Ocean Pearl, Vivanta).
- **Dining:** Local vegetarian eateries and *Prasadam* halls at nearby Kateel temple; diverse dining options available in Bajpe and Mangalore.

Nearby Tourist Spots

- **Pilikula Nisargadhama (~16 km):** An eco-tourism park featuring an artisan village, biological park, planetarium, and boating lake.
- **Tannirbhavi & Panambur Beaches (~25–28 km):** Popular coastal beaches near Mangalore.

- **Sammilan Shetty's Butterfly Park (~18 km, Belvai):** A natural butterfly sanctuary nearby.

Donation Info & Contact Details

- **Address:** Shree Somanatheshwara Cave Temple, Nellitheertha, Kuppepadavu Post, Mangalore Taluk, Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka - 574144.
- **Phone Numbers:**
  - Temple Office: +91 824 229 9142
  - Mobile / Trust Contact: +91 80887 08914
- **Email:** vbnellitheertha@yahoo.com
- **Donations:** Accepted at the temple office counters via Cash, Cheque, or UPI for various developmental work, *Anna Dāna*, and temple maintenance. Official receipts are issued on the spot.

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Ref: GrokAI

Somanatheshwara Guhalaya (Nellitheertha Cave Temple)

Somanatheshwara Guhalaya (Nellitheertha Cave Temple / Shree Kshetra Nellitheertha Somanatheshwara Guhalaya) is a historic Hindu cave temple dedicated to Lord Shiva (as Somanatheshwara / Jabaleshwara) in Dakshina Kannada district, Karnataka. It is known for its natural cave, sacred pond, and limited seasonal access.

Location
Located in Nellitheertha (also spelled Nellithirtha / Nelliteertha), Neerude / Kompadavu village area, Mangalore Taluk, Dakshina Kannada district, Karnataka (approx. PIN 574144). It is about 25–30 km northeast of Mangalore city (some sources note shorter distances of ~15–20 km depending on the route). Nearby landmarks include Kateel (roughly 5–8 km). Address references include 2W85+GG4, Kuppepadav, Nellitheertha.

How to Get There
- **By Air**: Mangalore International Airport (Bajpe / IXE) is the nearest (~13–15 km / 30–40 minutes by cab).
- **By Rail**: Mangalore Central or Junction stations (~25–30 km); then taxi/bus.
- **By Road**: Well-connected by road from Mangalore.

Common routes:

- Via Moodabidri road: Through Gurupura, Kaikamba, Yedapadavu, then deviation toward Muchur (~8 km from Yedapadavu).
- Via Bajpe / Kathelsaar.
- Via Kateel (short distance from there).
- From Bangalore: Deviation at BC Road via Polali/Kaikamba.

Public buses and taxis are available from Mangalore; private vehicles are convenient. Good motorable roads.

Speciality of This Temple

It is one of Karnataka's notable large natural cave temples. Key unique features include:
- A ~200 m (some accounts say up to 300–400 m) natural cave that narrows, requiring crawling in parts to reach the inner sanctum.
- A sacred natural pond (Nellitheertha) fed by perennial water droplets shaped like gooseberries/amla ("nelli"), giving the place its name.
- A naturally formed Shivalinga (Jabaleshwara) by the pond.
- Healing mud/soil around the pond, believed to help with certain skin ailments; taken as prasadam.
- Cave access only for ~6 months a year (typically mid-October to mid-April, from Tula/Dhanur Sankramana to Mesha Sankramana), and only until afternoon Mahapuja. The outer temple remains open year-round.
- Open to all castes and creeds; devotees must bathe in the outer Nagappa Kere pond and enter the cave in wet clothes. The area around the pond/linga is spacious enough for many people. Linked closely with Kateel Durga Parameshwari Temple.

History and Legends

Recorded history dates to at least 1487 CE, with evidence suggesting greater antiquity (over 700 years under local rule). It was under the care of the Chowta family (of Tulu Nadu / Moodabidri area); descendants still support it. There are Jain-related artifacts (e.g., idol, king's seat/mantapa). The temple declined in the later 20th century but has undergone renovations (including in recent decades) with devotee support; major ongoing renovation aims for Brahmakalasha around 2026–27.

Legend: Sage Jabali performed penance here seeking Goddess Durga Parameshwari's help against the demon Arunasura (who had misused the Gayatri mantra given by the sage). The Goddess appeared, later took the form of a bee/wasp (Brahmari), and killed the demon at Kateel (on the Nandini river). She assured that Shiva, Vishnu, and herself would reside in the region: Shiva as Somanatheshwara at Nellitheertha, Vishnu at Kompadavu, and Durga at Muchur/Kateel. The cave is also associated with Jabali's seat of penance. The pond is linked to Ganga flowing via Shiva's locks; it is sometimes called a form of Dakshina Kashi for the six months it is accessible.

Architecture

Primarily a natural cave temple rather than elaborately built stone architecture. The outer main temple houses the Saligrama Shivalinga of Somanatheshwara (described as Ardhanareeshwara form in some accounts) and related structures. Artifacts include Arasule Mancha / Mantapa (king's seat/pavilion) and a Jain idol. The cave itself features a natural pond with the linga on a natural pedestal; water continuously drips in amla-like shapes. Renovation work continues to improve facilities while preserving the sacred character.

Main Deity and Subdeities

- **Main deity**: Lord Shiva as Somanatheshwara (outer temple; Saligrama linga) / Jabaleshwara (inner cave natural linga).
- **Subdeities / associated**: Sri Mahaganapathi (daily worship), Jabali Maharshi (seat of penance), and local Bhutas/Ganas such as Pili-Chamundi (tiger form), Kshetrapala, Raktheshwari, and Doomavathy (common in Tulu Nadu tradition).

Daily worship of Somanatha and Mahaganapathi follows Agama Shastra.

Daily Rituals and Poojas and Their Charges

The outer main temple conducts daily poojas (typically three times a day) according to Agama Shastra throughout the year. Cave (Guha Pravesha / Theertha Snana) access is seasonal: generally 7/7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. (or variations noted as 5 a.m.–1 p.m. in some older sources), only until Mahapuja.

Specific current charges for routine sevas (Abhishekam, Archana, etc.) are not publicly detailed online in a fixed tariff list. Contact the temple office for the latest rates and booking, as they can vary. Basic darshan/entry to the outer temple is typically free or low-cost; special arrangements may involve donations or fees.

Special Poojas and Their Charges

Special rituals include Rudrabhishekam, Abhishekam (notably on Mondays or festivals), and others arranged on request. Festival-related grand abhishekas (e.g., with multiple vessels of water) occur during the annual Jaatre. Exact current charges are not listed publicly—inquire directly with the temple for availability, timing, and costs. Online or advance booking may be limited; physical contact is preferred.

Festivals Celebrated

- **Guha Pravesha / Theertha Snana**: Annual opening of the cave for holy bath (starts around mid-October, e.g., 17 Oct in recent years, until ~14 April / Mesha Sankramana). Rituals mark the start.
- **Annual Jaatre / Utsava:** Typically 5–6 days in late December or early January (around full moon of Dhanurmasa / Shukla Paksha 14th day). Includes Dhwajaarohana (flag hoisting), processions (Balis), Rudrabhisheka, Rathotsava (chariot), Aarat, Avabhrutha

Snana, and interactions with local Bhutas (e.g., Pilichandi Bheti). Cultural elements and community participation are strong.
- Other observances: Monthly Sankramana specials, Pradosha, Maha Shivaratri, and routine festivals for Somanatha and Ganapathi.

Facilities Available for Devotees such as Accommodation

Changing rooms/enclosures (separate for ladies) are available for the cave bath. Basic facilities exist, and the site is recognized as a tourist centre by the Karnataka government, with ongoing renovations to improve infrastructure (parking, access, etc.). However, facilities are still developing and may be limited.

Accommodation: No major temple guest houses or hotels directly at the site. Stay options are available in nearby Kateel (lodges/guest houses, ~5–8 km) or Mangalore city (wide range of hotels). Carry spare dry clothes for after the wet-clothes cave entry.

Do's and Don'ts

****Do's**:**
- Bathe in Nagappa Kere (outer pond) before cave entry and enter in wet clothes.
- Follow temple representatives' guidance inside the cave.
- Carry spare clothes; respect the seasonal and timing restrictions.
- Maintain silence and devotion; take mud only as prasadam if permitted.
- Open to all (generally above age 5, irrespective of gender/caste).

****Don'ts**:**
- Do not enter the cave outside permitted months/timings or beyond the pond/linga area.
- Avoid photography inside the cave (safety and sanctity reasons noted in guides).
- Do not litter or damage the natural cave environment.
- Large luggage should generally be left outside.

Confirm any specific rules on-site, as practices can be updated.

Nearby Temples

- **Kateel Sri Durga Parameshwari Temple** (~5–8 km): Closely linked by legend; major regional temple on the Nandini river.
- Vishnu temple at Kompadavu (nearby).
- Durga-related sites at Muchur.
- Other regional temples in the broader Mangalore/Moodabidri area (e.g., further afield: Kadri, etc.).

Nearby Hotels

Limited options right at Nellitheertha. Prefer Kateel area lodges/guest houses or Mangalore city hotels (budget to mid-range widely available). Examples near Kateel/Mangalore include local lodges, resorts such as The Estate Resort or others in the broader area (check current

availability and distance on booking platforms). Airport-area or city hotels offer more comfort for multi-day stays.

Nearby Tourist Spots

- Kateel temple and surroundings (scenic river setting).
- Natural surroundings of the cave itself (lush greenery, hills such as Amblattapadavu nearby).
- Mangalore city attractions, beaches, and other temples.
- Further: Moodabidri (Jain heritage), coastal spots, or waterfalls in the district. The cave experience itself combines spirituality, mild adventure (crawling), and nature.

Donation Info with Contact Phone Number

Donations support maintenance, renovation (estimated ~₹2.25 crore for current works), and facilities.

****Bank details**** (Shri Somantheshwara Temple Jeernodhara Samithi):
Karnataka Bank, Aikala Branch, Dakshina Kannada
S.B. Account: 0122500100786201
IFSC: KARB0000012

Inform the temple of contributions via email or WhatsApp.

****Contacts****:

- Phone/WhatsApp: +91 80887 08914
- Alternate noted: +91-824-229-9142
- Email: vbnellitheertha@yahoo.com
- Official site: nellitheerthacavetemple.com

Address for correspondence: Sri Somanatheshwara Cave Temple / Sri Kshetra Nellitheertha, Neerude Post, Kompadavu Village area, Mangalore Taluk, Dakshina Kannada.

Any Other Info

The site blends deep spirituality with a mild adventure element due to the crawl through the cave. Mud from near the pond is valued for its purported medicinal properties (especially skin-related). The outer temple continues full rituals year-round even when the cave is closed (believed to be a resting/rejuvenation period for the sacred space). Renovation is active to better serve increasing visitors. Always verify current timings, cave opening status, and any temporary restrictions closer to your visit, as they follow the Hindu calendar and local decisions. The temple emphasizes accessibility and devotion over elaborate commercial facilities.
For the most accurate and up-to-date details (especially sevas, exact opening dates, or renovation progress), contact the temple directly using the numbers/email above or check the official website.
****

Ref: ClaudeAI

Somanatheshwara Guhalaya, or

(Nellitheertha Cave Temple)

Location

The temple is nestled amidst the verdant landscapes of Dakshina Kannada district, approximately 15 kilometers from the coastal city of Mangalore. (Bharat Temples) The full address is Neerude Post, Kompadavu Village, Mangalore Taluk, South Kanara District, Karnataka – 570063. (lightuptemples)

How to Get There

By Road from Mangalore: Take the route towards Moodabidri, travel beyond Gurupura and Kaikamba to reach Yedapadavu, then take a deviation towards Muchur — Nellitheertha is 8 km from Yedapadavu. (Blogger) Alternatively, reach Kateel first (Nellitheertha is about 5 km away from Kateel). (Blogger)

From Bangalore: Take a deviation at B.C. Road and go through Polali and Kaikamba to reach Nellitheertha, avoiding travel through Mangalore city. (Blogger)

By Air: The nearest airport is Mangalore International Airport, about 15 km away — roughly a 40-minute cab ride. (NativePlanet)

By Rail: Mangalore railway station is well connected to major cities; from there you can hire a taxi. (NativePlanet)

Local landmark route: it can also be reached via Yekkaru on the Bajpe–Kateel road, though the temple itself is somewhat interior. (Wheree)

Speciality of the Temple

It is a unique natural cave shrine (not a man-made structure) extending about 200 metres into the earth, combining natural geology with Dravidian temple architecture. (Bharat Temples)

The narrow, low passage forces devotees to crawl on their knees (Bharat Temples) — a physical act of humility considered part of the spiritual experience.

Inside, devotees walk/crawl about 200 metres to take a holy bath (theertha snana) in a natural spring-fed pool, (Nellitheerthacavetemple) and there's healing mud within the cave believed to have curative properties (frequently mentioned by devotees for skin ailments).

History and Legends

The temple's history dates back to 1487 CE (Blogger) (some sources say established/first recorded in the late 15th century).

Name origin: "Nelli" refers to the Indian Gooseberry (Amla) and "Theertha" means holy water — legend holds that water drops inside the cave form Amla-shaped droplets, and the spring water tastes like Amla, symbolizing the nectar of immortality and health. (Bharat Temples)

Jabali–Durga–Arunasura legend: Sage Jabali performed penance in the cave to appease Goddess Durga Parameshwari, seeking her help against the demon Arunasura (who had secured the Gayatri Mantra's blessing from the sage). Durga appeared, assured Jabali she would destroy Arunasura, and later took the form of a wasp to kill him on the banks of the river Nandini — the site of that event is today's Kateel temple. (RVA Temples) Durga further promised Jabali that Shiva, Vishnu, and she herself would grace the region with temples nearby — a Vishnu temple exists at Kompadavu and Durga is worshipped at Muchur, both close to Nellitheertha, while Shiva made Nellitheertha his own abode as Somanatheshwara. (RVA Temples)

Architecture

The temple is a rare blend of natural rock-cave formation and traditional Dravidian architecture (Bharat Temples) rather than a fully man-made structure.
The Lingam of Shri Somanatheshwara is made of pure Saligrama stone and is built in the Ardhanareeshwara form (Shiva-Shakti combined), considered highly sacred. (Shivalli Brahmins)

Other notable structures/artifacts on the premises: "Arasule Mancha" (King's seat), "Arasule Mantapa" (King's abode), and the "Jina Vigraha" (a Jain statue) — remnants pointing to the site's historical past. A recently rebuilt Shri Mahaganapati shrine also stands on the grounds. (Shivalli Brahmins)

To the east of the temple's entrance is the Amblattapadavu hillock, about 300–500 feet high, offering scenic views of surrounding areas including Bajpe Airport, Mangalore, and Panambur. (Blogger)

Main Deity and Sub-Deities

Main deity: Sri Somanatheshwara (a form of Lord Shiva), enshrined as the natural Saligrama Lingam in Ardhanareeshwara form deep inside the cave.

Sub-deities/shrines: Shri Mahaganapati (rebuilt shrine on temple grounds), and a shrine associated with Sage Jabali Maharishi.

Daily Rituals, Poojas and Sevas

Pooja sessions are conducted twice daily. (Wheree)

Darshan/cave timings: Sources give slightly varying timings — general darshan is from 7:00 AM to 1:00 PM daily, (Hindu Devotional Blog) while the cave (for theertha snana) is specifically open from Tula Sankranti to Mesha Sankranti — roughly October 17 to April 14 each year — daily from 7:30 AM to 1:00 PM (Nellitheerthacavetemple) (outside this window the cave interior for the holy bath is typically closed, though the outer temple continues regular worship).

The temple is open to devotees of all beliefs and castes. (Hindu Devotional Blog)
Sevas/poojas offered: Shatha Rudrabhisheka, Ekadasha Rudrabhisheka, Ganapati Homa, Durga Namaskara Pooja, Ranga Pooja, Satyanarayana Pooja, and Bhoota Nemas. (Hindu Devotional Blog)

On charges: I couldn't find a published, current price list for individual sevas at this temple — unlike larger temples (e.g., Dharmasthala, Nanjangud), Nellitheertha doesn't appear to have an official online seva-booking/pricing portal. Charges are best confirmed directly at the temple counter or by phone before your visit, since they can be revised without notice.

Festivals Celebrated

The annual Jaatre (temple fair) festival is celebrated over five days, usually in Dhanur Maasa, typically falling in the last week of December. (Hindu Devotional Blog)

Facilities for Devotees

Detailed facility listings (dormitory, cottages, annadana/free meals) weren't confirmed in available sources for this specific temple — it's a smaller, less commercialized shrine compared to nearby Dharmasthala or Kateel. It's advisable to call ahead (number below) to check accommodation and meal facilities before planning an overnight stay.

Do's and Don'ts

Be prepared to crawl on your knees through a narrow, low cave passage — wear old/washable clothes, as the cave floor is muddy/wet.

Not ideal for those with claustrophobia, mobility issues, knee problems, or heart conditions, given the crawling and confined space.

Cave/theertha snana access is seasonal (mid-October to mid-April) — plan visits accordingly if the cave bath is your main purpose.

Dress modestly, as at any Hindu temple; remove footwear before entering.

Follow temple staff/priest instructions inside the cave for safety, since it's a natural, low-lit passage.

Nearby Temples

Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple — about 5 km away, linked directly to the Nellitheertha legend (site where Durga slew Arunasura).
Vishnu Temple, Kompadavu — a Vishnu temple near Nellitheertha. (RVA Temples)
Durga Temple, Muchur — Goddess Durga is also worshipped at Muchur, near Nellitheertha. (RVA Temples)
Other well-known temples in the wider region include Dharmasthala and Mangaladevi/Kadri temples in Mangalore.

Nearby Hotels and Tourist Spots

This is a fairly rural/interior location, so lodging options are limited near the temple itself — most visitors stay in Mangalore city or near Kateel and visit Nellitheertha as a day trip.

For tourist spots, the Amblattapadavu hillock right by the temple offers scenic views of Bajpe Airport, Mangalore, and Panambur. Mangalore city itself (beaches like Panambur and Tannirbhavi, Kadri Manjunath Temple, Sultan Battery) makes a good base for combining with this visit.

I'd recommend a quick local search closer to your travel dates for current hotel options, since availability changes.

Donation Info and Contact

Phone: +91-824-2299142 (lightuptemples)

The temple has been raising funds for a renovation to improve accessibility and preserve the site's sacred character (Nellitheerthacavetemple) — donation details are best obtained directly via the phone number above or through the temple's website.

Website: nellitheerthacavetemple.com (also referenced as nellitheertha.org)

Other Useful Info

- Local Tulu name: Nellithirtha Guhalaya.
- The temple mud from inside the cave is popularly believed by devotees to help with skin ailments — many visitors carry some back, though this is folk belief rather than a formal temple offering.
- Since exact seva pricing, accommodation details, and festival dates can shift year to year, it's worth calling the temple number above a day or two before you travel to confirm current timings and any special program running (like the cave-bath season dates).

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Ref: perplexityAI

Somanatheshwara Guhalaya (or Nelliteertha Cave Temple), near Mangalore

Here is detailed information on **Shri Kshetra Nellitheertha Somanatheshwara Guhalaya (Nelliteertha Cave Temple)**, compiled under the headings shown.

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Location

Shri Kshetra Nellitheertha Somanatheshwara Guhalaya is situated in **Nellitheertha village**, near **Mangalore (Mangaluru)**, in **Dakshina Kannada district**, Karnataka. [1][2][3]

- **Address**:** 2W85+GG4, Kuppepadav, Nellitheertha, Karnataka 574144 [1]
- **Alternative locality references:** Neerude, Kompadavu village; about 30 km from Mangaluru city. [3][4]
- The temple lies in a lush, forested area, adding to its spiritual and natural ambiance. [1][5]

***

How to Get There

The temple is easily accessible from Mangaluru and surrounding towns. [1][2]
From Mangaluru (approx. 17–30 km depending on route)
- **By Air:** Nearest airport is **Mangalore International Airport** (~13.5 km). Hire a cab or auto from there (approx. 30 minutes). [1]
- **By Train:** Arrive at **Mangalore Central / Mangalore Junction**, then hire local transport. [1]
- **By Road:**
  - **Route 1:** Mangalore → Moodabidri road → pass Gurupura, Kaikamba → reach Yedapadavu → take deviation towards Muchur → Nellitheertha (~8 km from Yedapadavu). [2]
  - **Route 2:** Mangalore → Bajpe → Kathelsaar → continue to Nellitheertha. [2]
  - **Route 3:** From Kateel (famous Durga temple) → Nellitheertha (~5 km). [2]
  - **From Bengaluru:** Deviate at B.C. Road → Polali → Kaikamba → Yedapadavu → Nellitheertha (avoids city traffic). [2]

- **By Bus:** KSRTC and private buses ply to Kateel, Muchur, and Moodabidri; from there, hire local auto or jeep. [1]

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Speciality of This Temple
- One of **Karnataka's largest and most ancient cave t.emples**, dedicated to Lord Shiva as **Somanatheshwara**. [3][6]

- **Natural cave** about **200–300 meters long**, narrowing progressively, requiring devotees to **crawl on knees** to reach the sanctum. [1][2][6]
- Inside the cave: a **natural Shiva Linga (Jabaleshwara)** before a sacred **water body (Nelliteertha)** formed by gooseberry-shaped droplets falling from the ceiling. [3][6][4]
- Temple is **open only six months a year** (Oct–April); during monsoon, the cave remains closed. [1][7][3]
- Unique **spiritual adventure**: combination of devotion, nature, and physical effort. [1][5]
- The **mud in the cave** is considered to have healing properties and is distributed as prasada. [1]

***

History and Legends

Historical Background
- The temple dates back to at least **1487 CE** and was historically under the patronage of the **Chowta royal family** of Tulu Nadu. [1][2]
- Descendants of the Chowta family continue to participate in temple development and upkeep. [1]
- Archaeological features reveal **Jain influence** in the region, indicating cultural syncretism. [1]
- Recognized by the **Karnataka government** as a significant tourist and heritage site. [3][4]

Mythology and Legends

- The cave is believed to be the meditation spot of **Sage Jabali**, who performed penance to invoke **Goddess Durga Parameshwari** to destroy the demon **Arunasura**. [7][2][3]
- Goddess Durga appeared, took the form of a **bumble bee (Bhramari)**, and killed Arunasura at **Kateel**, where the famous **Kateel Durga Parameshwari Temple** now stands. [2][3]
- The goddess assured Sage Jabali that **Shiva, Vishnu, and Durga** would all have temples in the vicinity:
  - **Shiva** at **Nellitheertha** (Somanatheshwara)
  - **Vishnu** at **Kompadavu**
  - **Durga** at **Muchur** and **Kateel** [2]
- The name **Nellitheertha** comes from the **gooseberry (nelli)**-shaped water droplets that continuously fall in the cave, forming the holy pond. [1][4]

***

Architecture

- The main shrine outside the cave follows traditional **Agama Shastra** norms, with a **tiled roof**, stone walls, and a **deepastambha (flagpole)**. [3]
- The **cave sanctum** is natural, with a narrow passage leading to a spacious chamber housing the **Shiva Linga** and **holy pond**. [3][6]
- The path is **steep and slippery**, with water flowing underfoot, adding to the challenge and sanctity. [3][5]

- The temple complex includes shrines for **Maha Ganapati** and **Jabali Maharshi** outside the cave. [3][8]
- **Renovation and infrastructure improvement are underway as part of an upcoming **Brahmakalashotsava**. [**3][4]

***
Main Deity and Sub-deities

- **Main Deity**:** **Shri Somanatheshwara (Shiva Linga)** inside the cave, also called **Jabaleshwara**. [3][8]
- **Sub-deities**:**
  - **Shri Mahaganapati** (outside the cave) [3][8]
  - **Sage Jabali Maharshi** shrine [3][8]
  - Nearby regional deities (in the broader Nellitheertha–Kateel–Muchur circuit):
    - **Durga Parameshwari** at Kateel and Muchur
    - **Vishnu** at Kompadavu [2]

***
Daily Rituals and Poojas (and Charges)

- **Darshan Timings (Oct–April only):**
  - Morning: **5:00 AM – 1:00 PM**
  - Evening: **5:00 PM – 8:00 PM** [1]
  - Cave entry allowed only until **Mahapuja** (afternoon); exact cutoff may vary daily. [3]

- **Pre-entry Ritual**:**
  - Devotees must first bathe in the **Nagappa Kere** (temple pond) and enter the cave in **wet clothes**. [3]

- **Daily Poojas**:**
  - Regular **Abhisheka, Alankara, and Archana** to Somanatheshwara and Mahaganapati as per Agama Shastra. [3]
  - Special **Mahapuja** conducted daily in the afternoon, after which cave entry stops. [3]

- **Pooja Charges**:**
  - Specific published rates for daily poojas are not widely listed online.
  - A nominal **entry/cave access fee** (around ₹100 per person, as per some visitor accounts) is collected for maintenance and safety. [2]
  - For exact pooja rates and booking, it is best to contact the temple office directly (see contact details below).

***
Special Poojas and Their Charges

- **Guha Pravesha & Tirtha Snana (Annual Festival):**
  - Marks the **opening of the cave** for the season (usually mid-October, around Tula Sankramana). [3][4]
  - Inaugurated by senior pontiffs (e.g., Sri Chitrapura Mutt) and temple priests. [3][4]

- Involves **special homas, Abhisheka, and mass holy bath** in the cave pond. [3]

- **Brahmakalashotsava (Upcoming):**

- A major consecration festival is planned (next cycle after renovations). [3][4]
  - Will include **punarpratishtha (re-consecration)**, homas, processions, and cultural events.
- **Donation and sponsorship opportunities are typically available for such events.**

- **Special Poojas (on request):**
  - **Rudrabhisheka, Lakhabhisheka, Ganapati Homam**, etc., can likely be arranged through the temple office.
- Exact charges and procedures should be confirmed by phone or in person.

***
Festivals Celebrated

- **Guha Pravesha & Tirtha Snana Festival** (Oct/Nov):**
- Marks the start of the six-month darshan season. [3][4]
- Features religious rituals, sacred bathing, and large gatherings. [4]

- **Jaatre (Annual Festival):**
- Held in the **last week of December** at Nellitheertha. [1]
- Includes special poojas, processions, and cultural programs. [1]

- **Mesha Sankramana (April):**
- Marks the **closing** of cave access for the monsoon season. [3]
- Final **Mahapuja** and Tirtha Snana are conducted before closure. [3]

- **Maha Shivaratri**:**?
  - Special Abhisheka and night poojas to Somanatheshwara, with large devotee turnout. [general Shiva temple practice; specific local confirmation recommended]

***
Facilities for Devotees

Current Facilities

- **Drinking water**, basic toilets, and small resting areas near the temple. [general inference from similar temples; specific details limited]
- **Wheelchair-accessible entrance** (as per some listings), though the cave itself is not accessible for differently abled or elderly due to crawling requirement. [9]
- **Small parking area** for cars and two-wheelers.
Accommodation
- **No temple-run accommodation (dharmashala)** is prominently listed for Nellitheertha itself.
- Devotees typically stay in:
  - **Mangaluru city** (15–30 km away) – wide range of hotels/lodges.

- **Kateel** – some private lodges and guest houses near the Durga temple.
- **Moodabidri / Mulki** – budget and mid-range hotels.

- **For large groups or special events, arrangements may be made in coordination with temple trustees.**

***
Do's and Don'ts

Do's
- Bathe in the **Nagappa Kere** before entering the cave; wear **wet clothes** as required. [3]
- Carry a **change of clothes**, towel, and plastic bag for wet attire.
- Use **footwear that can be easily removed**; there may be rough and wet paths.
- Follow instructions of temple volunteers and priests, especially inside the cave.
- Maintain silence and decorum inside the cave; it is a deep meditation space. [5]
- Visit during the **morning hours** to avoid crowds and heat.

Don'ts
- Do **not enter the cave** if you have:
  - Severe back, knee, or respiratory issues
  - Claustrophobia
  - Pregnancy or advanced age (due to crawling and slippery path)
- Do not carry **phones, cameras, or valuables** into the cave unless explicitly permitted.
- Avoid wearing **silk or expensive clothing** that may get damaged by water and mud.
- Do not attempt to go **beyond the sacred pond**; that area is restricted. [3]
- Do not visit during **monsoon (May–September)** when the cave is closed.

***
Nearby Temples
- **Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Temple** (~5 km)
  - One of the most powerful Shakti Peethas in the region. [7][2]
- **Muchur Durga Parameshwari Temple** (near Kateel)
  - Ancient Durga temple linked to the Jabali legend. [2][10]
- **Kompadavu Vishnu Temple**
  - Part of the triad (Shiva–Vishnu–Devi) promised by Durga to Sage Jabali. [2]
- **Puthige Mahatobhara Shri Somanatheshwara Temple** (Moodabidri)
  - Another historic Shiva temple with strong Chowta royal connections; recently underwent Brahmakalashotsava. [11][12]
- **Polali Chendu Bhagavathi Temple**, **Ullal Sri Someshwara Temple**, etc., within 20–30 km radius.

***
Nearby Hotels
As there are no major hotels in Nellitheertha itself, consider:
In Mangaluru (15–30 km)
- Wide range of options: budget lodges to 4-star hotels.
- Areas: **Kankanady, Hampankatta, Bejai, Pandeshwar**.

In Kateel / Moodabidri (5–15 km)
- **Kateel:**
  - Private lodges and guest houses near the Durga temple.
- **Moodabidri:**
  - Budget and mid-range hotels; some heritage stays.
In Mulki / Surathkal (10–20 km)
- Several lodges and resorts near the highway and beaches.

For exact names and contacts, local travel portals or Mangaluru hotel listings can be consulted.

***
Nearby Tourist Spots

- **Kateel Durga Temple** – major pilgrimage and cultural site. [7]
- **Muchur Durga Temple** – ancient, serene, and less crowded. [10]
- **Puthige Somanatheshwara Temple** – newly renovated, architecturally rich. [11][12]
- **Beaches:**
  - **Mulki Beach**, **Surathkal Beach**, **Tannirbhavi Beach** (near Mangaluru).
- **Religious-cum-nature spots:**
  - **Kadri Manjunatha Temple**, **Mangaladevi Temple**, **Gokarnanatheshwara Temple (Kudroli)** in Mangaluru.
- **Natural attractions:**
  - **Pilikula Nisarga Dhama** (wildlife and botanical park)
  - **Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary** (near Ullal)

***
Donation Info and Contact Details

Temple Contact
- **Phone**:** **+91-824-229-9142** (Nellitheertha temple contact number) [1]
- **Address**:**
  Shri Kshetra Nellitheertha Somanatheshwara Guhalaya
  2W85+GG4, Kuppepadav, Nellitheertha,
  Karnataka 574144 [1]

Donations
- Donations for:
  - **Temple maintenance**
  - **Brahmakalashotsava and renovation**
  - **Daily poojas and special sevas**
- **Modes of donation (typical for such temples; confirm by phone):**
  - **Cash** at the temple office
  - **Bank transfer / UPI** (if temple account is available)
  - **Sponsorship** for specific events (e.g., Abhisheka, Annadanam, festival sevas)

For exact bank details and donation procedures, contact the temple office or trustees directly.

Any Other Information

- **Cave Access Period:**

  - Open: **Mid-October (Tula Sankramana) to Mid-April (Mesha Sankramana)** [7][3]
  - Closed: **May to September** (monsoon and ritual closure) [1][3]

- **Physical Challenge**:**

  - The cave path is **narrow, steep, and slippery**; crawling is required for ~200–300 meters.
  - Not suitable for young children, elderly, or those with mobility or health issues. [1][3]

- **Spiritual Significance:**

  - Considered a **siddha kshetra** (place of spiritual power) due to Sage Jabali's tapas and the presence of the natural Linga and theertha. [7][3]
  - The **mud and water** in the cave are treated as sacred prasada with healing properties. [1]

- **Government Recognition:**
  - Recognized by the **Karnataka government** as a significant tourist and heritage site; infrastructure improvements are ongoing. [3][4]

- **Photography**:**
  - Typically **restricted inside the cave**; check with temple authorities before carrying cameras.

***

Videos

Nellitheertha cave temple (15 min):
https://youtu.be/MvNtxKOunh4?si=SnZy_7ly6hjkxDcD

Nellitheertha Somanatheshwara Guhalaya (6 min):
https://youtu.be/pI9n5BZCbSM?si=Dp1WFE8qVHKt_-Cj

Nellitheertha Sri Somanathesheara cave temple ..FaceBook (1.3 min):
https://www.facebook.com/share/r/19Hej8Rzd4/

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About the Author

Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar is a Mechanical Engineer with specialization in Cryogenics. He obtained his B. E. In Mechanical Engineering from Karnataka Regional Engg College, (Now NITK), Surathkal, India and M.Sc. in Cryogenics from the University of Southampton, U.K., and Ph.D. from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore.

He has worked in prestigious organizations such as BARC, Bombay and Centre for Advanced Technology (CAT), Indore,as Head of Cryogenics Dept and contributed to the design of cryogenic systems, including the Thermovac chamber for ISRO, Bangalore.

He was also a visiting fellow at Superconducting Super Collider Project, at Texas, USA.

He has also served as Professor, Head of Department, and Principal in reputed engineering institutions.

Dr. Thirumaleshwar has authored a large number of FREE ebooks on Engineering subjects such as Thermodynamics, Heat Transfer, and Cryogenic Engineering, which are useful for students and teachers.

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Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar
August 3, 2026

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